

That which is claimed:

1. A composite nonwoven fabric comprising a first air permeable nonwoven layer comprised of fibers having a first non-circular cross section; and a second air
5 permeable nonwoven layer located adjacent to said first layer and comprised of fibers having a second non-circular cross section which is different from said first non-circular cross section.

2. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein said first non-circular cross section is trilobal and said second non-circular cross section defines four or more
10 lobes.

3. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 2, wherein the fibers of said first nonwoven layer are of a different size from the fibers of said at least one additional nonwoven layer.

4. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1 wherein said first and second
15 nonwoven layers are each spunbond nonwoven fabrics formed of continuous filaments.

5. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 5 wherein said spunbond fabric has a basis weight ranging from about 0.2 to 8 oz./square yd.

6. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein the fibers of each of said
20 layers have a denier per filament in the range from about 3 to 24.

7. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 1, wherein said first nonwoven layer defines one of the outer surfaces of the composite nonwoven fabric, and including a third nonwoven layer located opposite said first layer and adjacent to said second
25 nonwoven layer and defining an opposite outer surface of the composite nonwoven fabric, the fibers of said third nonwoven layer having a cross section that is different from said second non-circular cross section.

8. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 7, wherein the fibers of said third nonwoven layer have a trilobal cross section.

9. A pleated filtration medium formed from the composite nonwoven fabric of claim 1.

5 10. A nonwoven fabric comprising:

(a) a first air permeable layer of substantially continuous filaments of first non-circular cross section defining a first outer surface of the fabric;

(b) a second air permeable layer of substantially continuous filaments defining an opposite outer surface of the fabric; and

10 (c) at least one air permeable intermediate layer of substantially continuous filaments of a second non-circular cross section disposed between said first and second layers, and wherein said second non-circular cross section is different from said first non-circular cross section.

11. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 10 wherein the filaments of said
15 first and second layers have a trilobal cross section and the filaments of said at least one intermediate layer have four lobes.

12. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 10 wherein the filaments of each of said layers have a denier per filament in the range from about 3 to 24.

13. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 12, wherein the filaments in one of
20 said layers have a denier per filament different from the filaments in another one of said layers.

14. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 13, wherein the filaments in said first layer have a denier per filament smaller than the filaments of said at least one intermediate layer, and the filaments in said second layer have a denier per filament
25 greater than the filaments of said at least one intermediate layer.

15. A nonwoven fabric according to claim 10 wherein the continuous filaments of a first non-circular cross section and the continuous filaments of a second

non-circular cross section are polyester filaments and are bonded to one another at filament cross over points.

16. A nonwoven fabric comprising:

- 5 (a) a first air permeable layer of substantially continuous polyester filaments of a trilobal cross section defining a first outer surface of the fabric;
- (b) a second air permeable layer of substantially continuous polyester filaments of a trilobal cross section defining an opposite outer surface of the fabric; and
- (c) at least one air permeable intermediate layer of substantially continuous polyester filaments of a quad-lobal cross section disposed between said first and second
- 10 layers, and wherein the filaments of said first, second and intermediate layers are bonded at filament cross over points for form a strong, coherent, unitary nonwoven fabric.